Dear Parents and Carers

At the beginning of each school year, it’s an exciting time for staff and students alike – it was great to see you at the BBQ last Friday! Thanks to all involved for participating and organising. Thank you to Bunnings at Oxley who have donated two ‘buddy benches’ which the students who happily painted with their handprints. The buddy bench is a simple idea to foster friendship for students who may feel lonely or sad at school time. If a student sits on the bench, a friend will come by and invite them to play or walk and talk. Our buddy benches will be installed in the playground soon!

Parent Information Night: Tomorrow night (Wednesday) we are holding a Parent Information Evening. Please go directly to your child’s class at 6.30pm where their teacher will speak about the year ahead, homework and class expectations. The session will be repeated at 7:10pm to allow you to go to another year level.

During the Christmas holidays, part of our playground was transformed into the outdoor education centre. This centre is comprised of a butterfly garden, an outdoor classroom, a labyrinth, a sundial, an extra handball court and a dry creek bed. During the next few weeks, students will be introduced to each area by their teacher and it will become available for playtime for all students soon.

You may have noticed the new flashing 40K sign outside our school which was established during the holidays – please always be mindful of the speed zones around our school. Parents are requested to park on the street for dropping off and picking up. Our main electronic school sign is not working at the moment – it will be re-instated later this year when we will be re-furbishing the administration block and staff carpark.

Please join us for the opening school mass at 9:30am this Friday if you can.

Enjoy the week ahead.
Allison Malouf
Principal

God of our sacred journeys
Be with us as we enter the Holy door of our new year together.
Lent: A time of Love, Mercy & Hope

This Wednesday we celebrate the start of the Church’s Season of Lent when we gather in the Church for Ash Wednesday. On this occasion we will be marked with a cross of ashes on our forehead as a reminder that we are beginning our journey through Lent and towards Easter. The ashes on our foreheads are not only a reminder of the ideals of this Lenten season but also our commitment to them.

The Church gives us Ash Wednesday to mark the beginning of the time called Lent, which lasts for 40 days. 40 Days is a number with symbolic meaning. The Jews spent 40 years in the desert on their way to the Promised Land. Jesus spent 40 days and 40 nights fasting in the desert before beginning his ministry.

Lent is a time of preparation for Easter when Jesus will rise from the dead. During Lent we will see a difference in our Church as we say goodbye to green colour of Ordinary Time and change to the purple of Lent. Lent is a special time when we can think about changing ourselves and putting other people first. Lent ends on the evening of Holy Thursday. We then begin the Triduum, the most sacred three days of the year, lasting through Easter Sunday morning.

During Lent we try hard to focus on 3 elements: PRAYER, FASTING and ALMSGIVING. Generously giving money to Project Compassion and praying for those people who will receive our donations of help is one way we can actively participate in the Lenten expectations of Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. As is our annual tradition at St Mark’s, Project Compassion will run again during Lent starting on Ash Wednesday. We are asking people from St Mark’s to join with others across Australia to help raise money and offer hope to the millions of families who fight for justice, peace and survival every day. More information coming soon about how your family can support this worthwhile cause!! And please take some time to pray for those we support who are in need.

Date Claimers ...

- **Lent** begins tomorrow with our celebration of **Ash Wednesday**. Parents and friends you are welcome to join us for a liturgy at 9:30 am in the Church.
- Our **Welcoming and Commissioning Mass** for 2016 will on **Friday 12 February** at 9:30am in St Mark’s Church. It will be a special time when we commit ourselves to “living love, mercy and hope in Jesus” during 2016. Our **Year 6 leaders** will also be presented to the community and they will be commissioned as they promise to lead St Mark’s to the best of their ability. Once again it promises to be a joyous occasion to start our school year. **All parents and friends are most welcome.**
- **Our Parent Information Night** will be on **Wednesday night, 10 February at 6:30pm.** It is most important that at least one parent from each family attends this meeting. Please assembly in your child’s classroom by 6:30pm.
- **Next Thursday, 18 February, 4G & 2B will celebrate their buddy class mass at 9:30am in the Church.**
- **Next Friday, 19 February,** **5G** will lead us in our Assembly Prayer at 8:45 in Mercy Hall.
- **The School Swimming Carnival** is on **Thursday 25 February** and is a wonderful way to demonstrate the virtue of Resilience! See you all there!

Virtue of the Week: Reverence

**What Reverence?**

Reverence is behaving with an awareness that you are always in the presence of the Creator and that all life is very precious. Reverence can be experienced in moments of prayer or reflection. It is treating Holy books and other sacred things as very, very special.

**You are practising reverence when you ...**

- Have an attitude of deep respect toward all living things.
- Have a regular practise of reflection or prayer.
- Treat sacred things with special care.
- Spend time in the beauty of nature.

Mrs Nikki Lysaght
Assistant Principal Religious Education
Mother Effect starts again tomorrow, **Wednesday 10 February**. Come along for coffee, morning tea and great conversation at the Mothers Group every Wednesday morning 9.30am - 11.30am at Lobelia House.

For further details, please call Carrie McCormack 043 429 0540 or Christine DaCosta 043 458 1406. This ministry is sponsored by St Mark’s Parish and School.

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**St Mark’s Uniform Shop**

is open **every** Friday during school term between 8am and 9am.

**Breakfast Club**

Available to students every Monday and Tuesday

Cost is $1.00 for toast, cereal and a drink.

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Homework club is run on a **Tuesday afternoon** for students in Year 3—6 in the **library** (NOT the 1st and last week of term) from 3-3.45pm. It is a time when two teachers are present to assist the students in completing their weekly homework.

Students are to remain in the library during this time. Afterwards, the students will be walked up to the office to be collected by the parents. This procedure is for the students’ safety.

**Homework Club Family Registration**

Please complete this section and return it to the school office if you wish your children to attend homework club.

Family Name: .................................................................
Parent Telephone Number ................................................
Student: .................................................. Class: ........
Student: .................................................. Class: ........
Student: .................................................. Class: ........
Student: .................................................. Class: ........

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**Cyber-safety: Tips for Parents!**

**Cyber Safety News from the Library**

Today is ‘Safer Internet Day’ a time to reflect on how students use devices to ensure they are safe. The following diagram is from the Office of the Children’s eSafety Commissioner and has a few hints to help us all.

Please come visit us in the library and any members of the administration team if you or your children need help. You can also find information on the following website: [https://esafety.gov.au/?from=cybersmart](https://esafety.gov.au/?from=cybersmart)

Thanks,

Leesa and Therese
Teacher-Librarians

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**St Mark’s Sacramental Program 2016 - Confirmation and First Holy Communion for children in Year 3 and above.**

Enrolment form with payment of $50 per child or $75 per family and a copy of your child’s Baptism Certificate must be lodged by **Friday 8th April** at the parish office, Parents must also attend a **Parents Information Session on Wednesday 13th April at 7pm in the church.** For the children, the teaching program commences on **Saturday 16th April.**

Enrolment forms can be collected from...
- The table at the church entrance
- The school office
- The parish office (office hours are Mon-Fri, 9am to 3pm)
- Downloading from parish web page: [www.stmarksinala.com](http://www.stmarksinala.com)

**Or by:**

Contacting the Parish Secretary:
Email: stmarks@bne.catholic.net.au;
Phone: 3372 5658
Thank you St Mark’s Community for making the Welcome BBQ a Success!